

[Close Window](#)[Click here to print](#) or select **File** then **Print** from your browser.

Where Have All of California's Adult Education Programs Gone?

Districts "flexing" Adult Ed Funds; Cutting Programs

By **Michelle Alaimo**

Adult Education has existed in California for more than 150 years and has provided millions of adults with educational opportunities that they wouldn't had otherwise. Adult Education provides adults with a chance to better their lives and learn new skills. But in the last two years, adult education programs across the state of California have been slashed or closed due to the "flexing" of adult education funds by school districts. So much slashing has occurred that, according to a recent adult education forum on KQED, California now ranks 50th in the nation for adult education offerings. How did this happen?

Prior to SB 3x 4 being signed by the Governor in February 2009, K-12 school districts passed through adult education funds to the adult education program serving the adults in their school district area. But because of SB 3x 4, districts are allowed to "flex" the funds which basically means they can decide to not offer any adult education programs but still get the adult education funds to use for other purposes. For districts that are facing constant budget cuts, this is free money that they are finding hard to turn down. The result has been the decimating of adult education in California and it's a short term solution to a long term budget crisis. Flexibility is scheduled to end July 1, 2013, that is unless it is extended by the Legislature. After that, districts will no longer receive adult education funds unless they are offering adult education programs and can show the ADA figures to support that they are.

The state's budget crisis is having a snowball effect on school districts across the state. Take for instance the San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) and the Metropolitan Adult Education Program (MAEP) in San Jose, California. This year, SJUSD added five furlough days to its calendar which means students lost five days of instruction and employees lost five days of pay. SJUSD would like to reinstate those five days and proposed at their December 9, 2010 Governing Board meeting that they cut the budget of MAEP by 67 % to reinstate those days and provide a new alternative school for 60 middle school students. MAEP has been providing adult education for SJUSD for 43 years and SJUSD has offered adult education to residents for more than 127 years. Now all of that adult education history may be history if SJUSD's Board votes to cut MAEP's budget at its January 20, 2011 Board meeting.

More than 350 community members, students and staff attended the SJUSD December Board meeting to show their support for adult education in San Jose. If SJUSD's Board votes to flex their three and a half million dollars from adult education, MAEP would be forced to close two of its three adult education centers, close its older adult program, close all of its community interest programs, and have an approximate 60 percent reduction in MAEP's core programs: English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED, High School Diploma, and Career Technical Education (CTE), MetroED Superintendent, Paul Hay, said at the meeting. He added that affects more than 5,000 adult students in San Jose.

What is happening in San Jose, California is just one example of what is happening to adult education programs across the state. It's one of the reasons why adult education offerings are dwindling throughout California. Those who work in adult education or have taken an adult education class know firsthand the incredible difference that the programs can make to an adult's life.

Adult education provides basic skills to those who need to learn English to become productive tax-paying citizens. It gives students a second chance at life by providing adults with the chance to earn their high school diploma or GED. Adult education provides training or re-training to adults who have been laid off or need to find a good paying job to support their families. Adult education provides hope to adults, many who are parents in the very school districts that are cutting the funding to adult education to continue to provide the children in their district with an excellent education. The flexing of adult education funds is forcing school districts to decide between K-12 funding or adult education funding.

After learning more about the cuts proposed to MAEP in San Jose, KQED Public Radio hosted a one hour public forum on December 13 that addressed the budget cut issue in San Jose as well as with other adult education providers throughout the state. Panelists included MetroED Superintendent, Paul Hay; SJUSD Superintendent, Vincent Matthews; MAEP GED Instructor Mary Stenseth; and Cyndi Parulan-Colfer, state legislative chair of the California Council for Adult Education (CCAE) and Associate Superintendent of Adult Education for Hacienda La Fuente School District. Panelists discussed the state of adult education throughout the state and callers, from every view point, both for and against adult education, were able to give their thoughts. To listen to the entire 45 minute adult education forum, visit [KQED](#).

--

Sources:

[SJMN's](#) Brown tells educators budget worse than he thought

[Adult Education & Categorical Funding](#)

Attendance at December 16 SJUSD Board meeting

More resources

- <http://www.kqed.org/a/forum/R201012130900>

2011 © Associated Content, All rights reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)